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Author(s): Buford Scrivner

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# Carolingian Monastic Library Catalogs and Medieval Classification of Knowledge

*Buford Scrivner*

The role of the monastic *scriptoria* and libraries of the Middle Ages in preserving the literature of the ancient world as well as of their own times is one whose importance has long been recognized. So valuable was their contribution to the survival of classical literature that scholarly attention to the catalogs of monastic libraries has dwelled with some tenacity upon this subject. In the study of the libraries of the Middle Ages that has the strongest claim to being definitive, *The Medieval Library* by James Westfall Thompson and his collaborators, the discussion of a library catalog is most frequently reduced to an enumeration of the classical works it contains.<sup>1</sup> A somewhat different interest motivates the enterprise of attempting to identify the titles listed in a medieval catalog with manuscripts currently extant.<sup>2</sup> Neither approach allows for sufficient consideration of the unique characteristics of the catalogs themselves as documents compiled for a specific type of institution and user during a period of history quite removed from the present. The concern of the following study of medieval monastic library catalogs is with matters that have hitherto been largely overlooked: the principles of construction of a catalog as an expression of the needs and values of the users of the libraries they record, and the relationship of a catalog as a cultural artifact to the intellectual milieu of its time.

Because the Carolingian period<sup>3</sup> is the earliest time from which catalogs have been preserved in significant numbers, and because the methods of arranging entries in these documents continued to appear in monastic library catalogs for centuries to come, four catalogs of the ninth and tenth centuries have been chosen as a

point of departure for an examination of classification practices in monastic library catalogs of the Middle Ages. The four catalogs are among those collected, largely from previously published sources, by Gustavus Becker in his *Catalogi Bibliothecarum Antiqui* and have been reduced to outline form in the four tables that follow.<sup>4</sup> These particular catalogs were selected for close examination because they were more liberally provided with headings of various kinds (author, subject, form) than were others of the period. Headings that were actually devised by the compilers of the catalogs serve to bring principles of arrangement into sharper focus and to present more substantial support for an origin of these principles in the catalogs themselves, rather than in the eye of the modern researcher. The collections listed in the four documents are also among the largest of the ninth and tenth centuries, the number of volumes enumerated in catalogs of this time ranging from partial lists of a dozen or so volumes to the more than six hundred from the monastery of Bobbio (table 4). In the other libraries under consideration, the books numbered 415 at Reichenau (table 1), 243 at St. Riquier (table 2), and 428 at St. Gall (table 3).<sup>5</sup> It would seem inevitable that more manifestly conscious efforts to impose order would accompany large numbers of books, although other extant catalogs of three to five hundred titles lack headings altogether. Even the largest monastic collections throughout the medieval period were astonishingly small when compared to the great libraries of antiquity or to those of the post-printing centuries; the library of the renowned monastery of Cluny in the twelfth century possessed fewer than six hundred volumes. In the kinds of works represented, however, these four libraries were entirely typical of monastic institutions in general. More central to the present investigation is the fact, as will be established by subsequent comparisons, that forms of arrangement employed in these early documents are encountered repeatedly in monastic library catalogs until as late as the fourteenth century. In the tables that summarize the four catalogs, *all headings or other explanatory matter in Latin are actually to be found in the catalogs themselves*, with abbreviation, capitalization, and punctuation following Becker. *Headings or commentary in English have been supplied* for one of the following reasons: to identify clearly discernible subject, author, or form groupings that do occur in the catalogs but are unannounced by any type of heading; to elucidate the contents of classes; or to translate less obvious phrases from the Latin.

*Table 1*  
*Catalog of the Monastery of Reichenau, 822*

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*De libris Veteris ac N. Testamenti* (Books of the Old and New Testaments)

*De opusculis S. AUGUSTINI* (Works of St. Augustine)

*De opusculis B. HIERONYMI* (Works of St. Jerome)

There follow six headings of identical form introducing works by Gregory the Great, Leo I, Cyprian, Eusebius (his church history), Hilary, Basil, and Athanasius.

*De vita patrum* (Chiefly lives of the church fathers, but also accounts of the destruction of Troy, *Apollonius of Tyre*, and a book on architecture)

*De libris Iosephi* (Josephus's history of the Jews)

Law (Civil, Roman, and Germanic codes)

History and Geography (Secular history only)

Medicine

Service books (Lectionaries, psalters, and antiphonaries)

*De opusculis S. AMBROSI* (Works of St. Ambrose)

There follow author headings for the works of John Chrysostom, Orosius, Cassian, Eucherius, Prosper (prose works only), Isidore of Seville, Bede, Cassiodorus, Primasius, Aldhelm (both poetry and prose), and Boethius.

*De libris canonum* (Canon law)

*De libris homilarium* (Collections of homilies, one noted as being arranged according to the calendar of church holidays)

*De regulis* (Monastic rules of Benedict and others)

*De passionibus sanctorum* (Hagiography)

*De libris glossarum* (Miscellanies of writings by "diversis doctoribus")

*De libris PRISCIANI*

Grammar and rhetoric (Priscian, Donatus, and others)

Poetry

Christian (Juvencus, Sedulius, Prosper, Aldhelm, and others)

Pagan (The *Georgics* and portions of the *Aeneid* of Virgil)

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*Table 2*  
*Catalog of the Monastery of St. Riquier, 831*

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*De libris: libri cononici* (One complete Bible, forty manuscripts of various of the Scriptures)

*De libris S. Hieronymi*

*De libris S. Augustini*

There follow author headings of identical form identifying works by Origen, Hilary, John Chrysostom, Cassiodorus, Fulgentius, and Bede.

*Diversorum* (Minor church fathers such as Primasius, Gregory Nazianzus)

*De canonibus* (Canon law)

Homilies

After a series of miscellaneous works including saints' lives, scriptural commentary, and some history, a note states that the *codices librorum claustralium de Divinitate*, that is, the works of divinity kept in the cloisters for the reading of the monks, number 195.

*De libris grammaticorum*

Grammar and rhetoric (Priscian, Donatus, Cicero)

Poetry (Christian and pagan together, including Prosper, Aldhelm, Virgil)

Medicine

*De libris antiquorum qui de gestis regum vel situ terrarum scripserunt*

These "books of the ancients who wrote of the deeds of kings or situation of the earth" include secular and church history, Pliny the Younger, and a geography.

Law (Civil)

*De libris sacariorum* (Service books: missals, lectionaries, antiphonaries)

A final note observes that the books owned by the community as a whole number 256.

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*Table 3*  
*Catalog of the Monastery of St. Gall, 9th Century*

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*LIBRI SCOTTICE SCRIPTI.* (Manuscripts in the “Scots,” or insular, hand)

*DE LIBRIS VETERIS TESTAMENTI.*

*ITEM DE LIBRIS NOVI TESTAMENTI.*

*DE LIBRIS BEATI GREGORII PAPAE.*

*DE LIBRIS HIERONIMI PRBI.*

There follow author headings of the same form preceding lists of works by Augustine, Ambrose, Prosper (prose writings only), Bede, Isidore, Cassiodorus, and Eusebius.

*DE LIBRIS DIVERSOĀ AVCTORVM*

Under this heading are grouped those works, primarily scriptural commentary, of authors represented by only a single title in this catalog as well as volumes of mixed authorship: for example, the histories of Jerome and Eusebius in a single manuscript.

*DE LIBRIS ALCHUUNI.* (Prose works only of Alcuin)

*DE REGVLIS SCORĀ PATRĀ.* (Monastic rules, often in the same volume with martyrologies)

*DE VITA SCORVM PATRVM.* (Lives of the church fathers and other saints)

*DE VIRTVTIB. SEV PASSIONIB. SCOR. APOSTOLOR. VEL MARTIRĀ.* (“Concerning the virtues and passions of the Apostles or martyrs,” with a single volume of canon law included)

*DE LEGIBVS.* (Civil law)

*LIBRI GLOSARIVM.* (Scriptural glosses and homilies)

Psalters

*DE METRIS.* (Christian poetry only, including works of Alcuin and Aldhelm)

History (Secular only)

*DE LIBRIS GRĀMATICE ARTIS.* (Grammar and rhetoric)

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*Table 4*  
*Catalog of the Monastery of Bobbio, 10th Century*

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(The original opening of the catalog having been lost, it begins in the middle of a listing of works by Augustine.)

Works of Augustine

*Item de lib. . . .* (Works of Jerome)

*Item de Eusebii libris.*

Author headings in the same form introduce works by Gregory the Great, Ambrose, Origen, Cyprian, and Isidore of Seville.

*Item de canonibus.* (Canon law)

*Item de libris diversorum auctorum.* (Various types of works from moral tracts to Pliny's natural history)

*Item de libris incertis.* (Works either of unknown or of collective authorship)

*Item de vita & passionibus sanctorum*

Saints' lives

Monastic rules

Language arts

Grammar, rhetoric, poetry (Christian and pagan intermingled)

Homilies (A note states that these are arranged for use at church festivals)

Books written in insular hand, obtained, it is claimed, from St. Columban himself.

Donor lists.

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The surviving catalogs from the ninth and tenth centuries were not designed as finding tools to assist in the use of the collections they enumerate. Apart from the thirteenth-century *Biblionomia*, Richard de Fournival's complex and idiosyncratic catalog of his private collection, the earliest medieval catalog to contain location information would appear to be that of Christchurch, Canterbury, dating from the beginning of the fourteenth century.<sup>6</sup> In respect to immediate purpose, Carolingian monastic catalogs, like those of the following centuries up to the late Middle Ages, were essentially inventories, some no more than donor lists arranged according to the names of those who had contributed books to the monastery. The number of titles contained in the different groupings in the tables varies greatly. It should occasion no surprise that the Scriptures, the major church fathers, and the liturgical works constitute the largest classes—the writings of St. Augustine, for instance, occupy from twenty to as many as forty volumes, with considerable duplication. The totals of the grammar, rhetoric, and poetic texts range from ten in the Reichenau catalog to almost forty in that from Bobbio, while the minor church fathers and such subjects as medicine and geography are generally present in only a volume or two. It should be kept in mind that the full contents of any individual manuscript are not often given, so the author or subject heading of any book was assigned on the basis either of the first work it contained or of what was considered the major work. Given the fact that facilitating access to the books does not appear to have been a concern in compiling the catalogs, one would expect to find no order whatsoever. In many cases this expectation is justified. Certainly no monastic library catalog of the medieval period, Carolingian or later, exhibits a full and meticulous classification scheme. Yet organization based upon author, subject, and form, as well as other less obvious principles, does occur with noteworthy frequency. Fields of knowledge can be seen to have been discriminated and disposed into rough hierarchical structures.

The catalog of the monastery of Reichenau, dated 822, opens with the Scriptures followed by writings of the church fathers gathered beneath author headings. The same pattern is encountered in the catalogs of St. Riquier and St. Gall, and, because of the loss of the beginning of the catalog, in incomplete form in that of Bobbio. Since the Bobbio catalog opens with a damaged, partially illegible, and uncharacteristically brief listing of works by Augustine, it is virtually certain that the Scriptures, followed by a fuller representation of Augustine, constituted the original be-

ginning. The practice of placing the Scriptures at the outset and following them immediately with patristic works in author arrangement was common in catalogs of the ninth and tenth centuries and was to prove viable for some time to come. Among Carolingian catalogs in which it occurs, in addition to the four summarized in the tables, are two from St. Vandille, one of the late eighth century and the other of the ninth, and another Reichenau catalog of somewhat later date than that of table 1.<sup>7</sup> In later centuries, it appears in eleventh-century catalogs from Toul and Schaffhausen,<sup>8</sup> in twelfth-century catalogs from the abbeys of St. Martin of Tournai and St. Martial of Limoges,<sup>9</sup> and from Durham Cathedral Priory, as well as in a thirteenth-century catalog from Glastonbury Abbey.<sup>10</sup> In the catalogs of the university libraries the author arrangement of patristic works gives way at last to subject classifications, as in a Sorbonne catalog of 1338 in which scriptural commentary is arranged according to the books of the Bible with which it is concerned.<sup>11</sup> In a slight departure from the typical pattern, the St. Gall catalog has as its first classification, preceding the church fathers, a group of manuscripts collocated on the basis of the script in which they were written. The "Scots" script would have been the insular hand used for copying many books during the sixth and seventh centuries in monastic institutions influenced by Irish and Northumbrian missionaries. These books may possibly have been set apart out of reverence for their age and association with saints such as Columban or Boniface, possibly because at this date the insular script appeared quaint and had become difficult to read, possibly both. Such a grouping of books occurs also near the end of the Bobbio catalog, and the practice bears some comparison with the *Libri Anglici*, or "English books," heading used in some English catalogs of the twelfth century and later to designate manuscripts in Anglo-Saxon, which had by that time become unreadable.

In the placement of individual works, the conflicting claims of author and subject interest were answered with varying solutions. Under the author heading for works of Augustine in the Reichenau catalog is listed a *De musica*, a work wrongly but widely attributed to that author. In a catalog of St. Gall, dating from somewhat earlier in the ninth century than the one outlined in table 3, the same pseudo-Augustinian *De musica* is found among works on the liberal arts and collections of poetry rather than with the group of theological writings by Augustine. Clearly the choice was between placement on the basis of subject of a work noticeably different in character from other writings by Augustine and the

collocation of all works by this most renowned of the church fathers. The same conflict is apparent in the placement of the church history of Eusebius. In the Reichenau and Bobbio catalogs Eusebius appears with other church fathers under an author heading, while in the St. Riquier catalog his work is placed among that of other writers of history, both church and secular.

In some cases it was form rather than author or subject that provided the basis for classification. An example from the Reichenau catalog is also one of many instances in which a heading does not indicate with altogether literal accuracy what is actually contained in the grouping of books it introduces. Under the heading *De libris PRISCIANI* are found not only the works of Priscian together with other grammar and rhetoric texts, but also a number of collections of poetry scrupulously separated into two groups so that the Christian poets precede the pagan ones. The separation of verse from prose on the basis of form and without respect to subject appears to have been a convention of formidable strength in medieval cataloging. In the St. Gall catalog the prose works of Prosper and Alcuin both are entered under author headings, while the poetic works of these writers come near the end under the *DE METRIS* heading. The same practice may be observed with regard to Prosper in the Reichenau catalog, but the author grouping for Aldhelm in this catalog includes his poetry, while one of his poetic works, which formed part of a collection of Christian poetry by various authors, appears under *De libris PRISCIANI*. The discrimination of Christian poets from pagan ones is much less frequent, the desire to distinguish *all* verse from *all* prose having apparently been more urgent than consideration of the subject of the verse. Both distinctions were maintained, with Christian poets preceding pagan ones, in the famous eighth-century "metrical catalog" of Alcuin, which was simply a versified author list of the library of York Cathedral and is contained in his long historical poem, *De Pontificibus et Sanctis Ecclesiae Eboracensis*.<sup>12</sup> Both were likewise maintained in the eleventh-century catalog of the monastery of Toul, which provides headings for the explicit distinction of the *Libri divinorum poetarum* from the *Libri gentilium poetarum*.<sup>13</sup> Among the "Gentile" poets, however, one also discovers the grammatical works of Donatus and Priscian, making this heading somewhat the obverse of the *De libris PRISCIANI* and the *De libris grammaticorum* headings of the Reichenau and St. Riquier catalogs, respectively, under which poetic works were included. Indeed, grammar and rhetoric texts are most often found closely associated in some fashion with works of poetry, by

being located beneath the same subject heading, intermingled in a common grouping without heading, or placed in separate but adjoining groups. In addition to those catalogs specified, such an association also appears in the catalog from Bobbio, in two from Lorsch compiled in the tenth century,<sup>14</sup> and, as in the catalog from Toul, beneath the heading *LIBRI GENTILIJUM POETARUM* in a twelfth-century catalog of the Abbey of St. Martin of Tournai.<sup>15</sup> Additional types of headings include the *Libris incertis* of the Bobbio catalog, used to designate works of unknown authorship, and the *Diversorum auctorum* of the St. Gall catalog, under which are grouped single works of various authors as well as collections of mixed authorship. Though interesting, the two latter types of headings represent isolated instances rather than recurrent tendencies.

Taking into account the fact that service books, lectionaries, antiphonaries, missals, and other texts of liturgical function were usually grouped together in medieval monastic catalogs, certain forms of collocation and arrangement can now be seen to appear with some regularity. A list of the Scriptures followed by at least the major and often a number of minor church fathers is a frequent pattern at the opening of a catalog. Verse of all varieties is commonly separated from prose works and usually appears either at the end or near the end of a catalog. Service books most often are grouped together, although their relative location within the overall arrangement varies from document to document. Beyond these more obvious features, there are two major recurrent patterns of association according to which certain subjects tend to cohere to each other in clusters. As previously observed, poetic works are often listed among or adjacent to grammar and rhetoric texts. The second type of association, formulated on its most general level, is between works concerned in various ways either with time (history, the computation of time, the observance of time through liturgy) or with law (civil law, canon law, monastic rules). In regard to this second pattern, it should be noted that although the service books commonly form a cohesive group rather than being scattered throughout a catalog, as a group they are found in association with other subject classes of the type listed above. When reduced to specific examples, this second kind of association manifests itself in varying combinations of the component subjects. The Reichenau catalog, for instance, lists under the heading *De vita patrum* not only lives of the church fathers but also some historical works concerning the classical, pagan past. The author heading *De libris Iosephi* introduces only two copies of

Josephus's history of the Jews; distinct subject groups containing considerably larger numbers of volumes follow with no type of heading whatsoever. In order, these are law, history, medicine, and the service books. In the catalog from St. Gall one finds, in succession, monastic rules, saints' lives, canon law, and civil law; in that from Bobbio, saints' lives and monastic rules are under a single heading. Associations between works concerned on some level of generality with time or law assume the following forms in other contemporary and later medieval monastic catalogs: St. Vandrille, 823-833, monastic rules, history, canon law; Lorsch, tenth century, service books, monastic rules, and cycles of martyrologies in one cluster, law and saints' lives in another; Lorsch, also tenth century, history and "computes" (tables for computing time and establishing dates); Toul, eleventh century, saints' lives and service books;<sup>16</sup> Massay, eleventh century, monastic rules, martyrological cycles, computes;<sup>17</sup> Glastonbury Abbey, thirteenth century, history, martyrologies, saints' lives, monastic rules;<sup>18</sup> Christchurch, Canterbury, fourteenth century, history, computes, martyrologies, monastic rules.<sup>19</sup>

Merely listing such examples of patterns of associations, though it may bring into sharper focus some of the peculiarities of cataloging in the medieval monastic library, does nothing to advance understanding them. For that purpose it is necessary to examine briefly the cultural heritage that shaped the way compilers of these catalogs are likely to have understood the world around them and the configuration of existing knowledge. If the cataloging practices of the Alexandrian or Roman libraries failed to be transmitted to the Middle Ages, at least one model for the arrangement of certain areas of knowledge relative to each other did survive. This was the group of seven liberal arts, the *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, dialectic) and the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music). In truth it was less a matter of the assimilation of a concept than of the persistence of terminology. From the time of Aristotle the liberal arts were conceived as those studies appropriate for the seeker after knowledge, not useful or practical knowledge, but that which would lead to moral and intellectual excellence in preparation for the highest of all disciplines, philosophy. Christianity was to provide a new context that radically altered their purpose and relative importance.

From the foundation of the Roman empire to the collapse of its western half in 476, the quality of literature and literary studies was in a state of decline. Rhetoric became the predominant liberal art, giving birth to an oratorical style of great inventiveness and

little substance and elevating the panegyric to favored status as a literary form. Liberal studies fell into a conservative dependence upon authority that was to become so pervasive and characteristic in the Middle Ages, each new text of grammar, rhetoric, or dialectic being simply a compilation from earlier ones. Grammar, often not clearly distinguished from rhetoric and combined with that subject in a single text, was studied through analysis of passages from Virgil, Ovid, and Horace. In a poverty of originality and inspiration, poetry was largely imitative of these and other authors of earlier times, Christian poets being no exception to the use of classical models. A poetic life of Christ composed in the sixth century by Proba, wife of a prefect of Rome, was made up entirely of lines from Virgil removed from their original context, while Prudentius and Prosper wrote religious verse in imitation of the epic form.<sup>20</sup>

It was in this kind of intellectual climate that Christianity developed and it was these traditions in literature and education it inherited upon receiving official sanction from Constantine in the fourth century. St. Augustine, trained in the liberal arts and a teacher of rhetoric himself at the time of his conversion, did not fail to sense an emptiness in the education he had received. In the *Confessions* he noted that he had learned the rules of correct speech and the techniques of persuasion, but no useful purpose for these skills nor any moral constraints upon their exercise. Concerned with the potential for abuse of language, Augustine regarded the incarnation of Christ as a redemption of language as well as of mankind. In his view, when God became man, He had spoken human language and enjoined believers to communicate in language His message to their fellows. Grammar and rhetoric could thus be reunited with substantive purpose: their function now was to assist in the interpretation of the Scriptures and effectively communicate this interpretation.<sup>21</sup> Lists of quotations from Christian writers from the ante-Nicene fathers straight through the Middle Ages can be, and on occasion have been, assembled to demonstrate the church's continuing ambivalence and inconsistency in its positions regarding classical pagan literature.<sup>22</sup> Though historically interesting, such compilations are finally inconclusive, because for all the expressions either of hostility or of tolerance, there was never in fact any real possibility that Christianity in Western Europe could dispense altogether with classical learning: Christianity, like Judaism, is a text-centered religion requiring the reading and study of certain unique and sacred writings; Latin, in the West, became the language of the church and

of these sacred texts themselves; and Christianity inherited an educational system in which the study of language was accomplished through analysis and imitation of passages from classical Latin literature.

The study of the Scriptures, however, did not stop simply at a mastery of the Latin language. There was in Christian thought something of a paradox whereby its central message was of such simplicity that a person of even the rudest understanding could grasp it sufficiently so as to secure salvation, while at the same time its doctrines offered complexities of such depth as to try human comprehension to its limit in their explication. It was generally believed that whatever was hidden or obscure in one part of the Scriptures was laid open and made plain in another, thus allowing for both the immediate communication of the message of redemption and the unending task of interpretation and commentary. Though often quite complicated in its result, the purpose of interpretation was simple: to uncover what was hidden. The interpretation of Scripture received no challenge as the highest and most complex form of intellectual activity until the advent of scholastic philosophy in the twelfth century, when questions of the relative domains of faith and reason began to be addressed. In the *De doctrina Christiana* Augustine explained that that which is obtained with difficulty is the more highly prized. Thus, he wrote, he found much greater delight in discovering the concealed meaning behind the metaphor in the Song of Songs, "Thy teeth are as flocks of sheep" (4:2), than had he been told directly that the saints were like the teeth of the church, which bite men free from heresies.<sup>23</sup> Any given passage could conceal more than one meaning, and, though allegorical interpretation had limits only in the imaginative powers of its practitioners and could thus give rise to bewildering arrays of significations, there were three standard levels of interpretation: the literal, the moral, and the anagogical (or that having to do with things eternal and divine). A well-known example of this method at work is the interpretation of the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt: it is a historical event precisely as described on the literal level; on the moral level it represents the individual turning away from a life of sin toward God; on the anagogical level, the passage from earthly to eternal life.

It becomes readily understandable, then, why the works of Donatus, Priscian, and other grammarians and rhetoricians not only are almost universally represented in medieval monastic catalogs but are frequently also found in conjunction with poetic works. For the medieval monks, Virgil, Ovid, Horace, as well as

Christian poets such as Prosper, Sedulius, and Juvencus who imitated the classical authors, represented models of correctness in Latin style. Christian poets appear to have been read not for substance but rather for form, and together with the pagan poets and the grammar and rhetoric texts they constituted a pedagogical apparatus for providing access to the language, the *litera*, of the Scriptures. Charlemagne himself emphasized the religious implications of literary studies in his well-known letter, written near the end of the eighth century, enjoining the improvement of education in the monasteries, the *Epistola de litteris colendis*. Concerning the failure of some monks in his kingdom to master Latin grammar, Charles observed, "We began to fear, therefore, lest this might lead to lamentable want of understanding of the Holy Scriptures, and we all know well that, dangerous as are errors in form, errors of understanding are far more to be feared."<sup>24</sup>

In addition to a measure of familiarity with the medieval approach to the reading and interpretation of Scripture, a consideration of the nature of monastic existence can contribute to the discovery of an explanation for aspects of arrangement in the monastic library catalogs. In short, the user groups and the purposes for which they used their libraries were important in influencing the form that the catalogs of the libraries assumed. By and large, an individual joined a monastic community so that through reading the Scriptures and devotional texts, rigorously observing a crowded liturgical regimen of prayer, private meditation, and a certain amount of self-denial, he might live safely insulated from the world and its temptations and achieve salvation.<sup>25</sup> When it is recalled that grammatical and rhetorical texts were frequently grouped with poetical works and located near the end of a catalog while the Scriptures and the church fathers opened it, a correspondence may be discerned between catalog arrangement and a valuative hierarchy of forms of knowledge:

Scriptures	-----	Divine revelation
Church fathers	-----	Interpretation revealing moral and anagogical levels of meaning
Grammar and rhetoric texts, poetic works	-----	Language study, access to literal level

As revealed truth, the Scriptures rest at the top of the hierarchy, whereas approaches to their study and understanding are disposed beneath in order of importance.

Certain kinds of groupings observable in monastic library catalogs must at times have corresponded in a loose fashion to the physical distribution of portions of the books. During the Carolingian period and for some time thereafter, the monastic complex normally would not have included a room set apart and designated for use as a library. Typically the books would have been scattered throughout the monastery in various locations according to use. Of these smaller collections there were three principal types: the liturgical or service books, kept in or near the chapel; the books for the monks' private reading (scriptural commentary, homilies), possibly kept in the *scriptorium* when not in active use; and the instructional books, the grammar, rhetoric, and literary texts, to be used for educating both novitiates and a certain number of youths not intended for the order. Although the trend in the later periods was toward increasing centralization, there seem to have been at all times separate smaller working collections of various types.<sup>26</sup> What is significant in the present context of discussion is not the degree of accuracy with which any of these catalogs records an actual order of arrangement of *books*, for which evidence until the very late Middle Ages is entirely lacking, but the fact that they reflect enduring assumptions concerning the relationships among and purposes of the various fields of *knowledge*.

One recurrent grouping, the service books, was noted to join in forming larger clusters with other groupings of books concerned in some manner with law or with time. The relationship of these subjects becomes less mysterious when the routine of life in the monastery is taken into account. The life was highly regulated, its activities governed by the monastic rule, the daily round of prayer at the liturgical hours, and the special offices on appointed days according to the calendar. The day and the year were patterned, and the pattern was repeated day after day, year after year. All history, too, was patterned, its beginning and its future termination familiar from Scripture and homily. The events of history represented a record of the working out of God's will, of which human laws were but a simulation, from Adam through the five Ages of Man comprising the old law (justice) and into the Sixth Age beginning with the birth of Christ and the advent of the new law (mercy). The lives and martyrdoms of the saints, read with great fervor and celebrated according to established schedule, illustrated God's law, and, far from being remote events, were real and immediate to the members of the monastic communities in a way most difficult to comprehend in a much less devout and credulous age. To some degree perhaps the very distinctions

among past and present and future were obscure to the minds of these monks, to whom both past and future were also always present and repeatedly commemorated in prayer, reading, and sacrament. Law, history, chronology, liturgy—these had in common the element of a form enduring and perpetually manifest. The fact that associations of these subjects appear in monastic catalogs from the Carolingian period to the fourteenth century indicates how unchanged in its essentials the monastic life remained.

Other subjects were certainly known, but found less full and frequent representation in the catalogs for two mutually dependent reasons: not a great deal was written on them and they were evidently perceived as peripheral to the central concerns of a cloistered existence. Because it lacked direct application to the study and interpretation of Scripture, dialectic, the third discipline of the *trivium*, is seldom evident until the twelfth century, when the new scholastic philosophy began to call for precise methodology in reasoning. The four disciplines of the *quadrivium*, music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy, along with architecture, medicine, history, and geography, clearly constitute information either necessary or potentially valuable to a monastic community. Indeed, some of them are usually found in most medieval catalogs. In assessing the importance of these subjects to the compilers of the catalogs, the sparseness of their representation is perhaps less important than the fact that, except for medicine, distinct groupings of books devoted to any of them virtually never occur in monastic library catalogs until the very end of the Middle Ages, though they do appear in cathedral library catalogs as early as the eleventh century and somewhat later in the university library catalogs.<sup>27</sup>

In summation, aspects of classification in medieval monastic library catalogs from the Carolingian and later periods are of two rather different types. The first consists of clearly deliberate devices such as author, subject, or form headings, or of collocation of titles without headings but according to some immediately obvious principle such as author, subject, or form. The second type involves features of arrangement that recur persistently but are not self-explanatory, such as the relative location of a subject group within a catalog (for instance, the placement of grammatical and poetic texts near the end), or associations of several subject groupings according to an undisclosed rationale (the frequent contiguity of works concerned at some level of abstraction with either law or time). Where headings were provided by the compilers of the catalogs, classification according to those headings

was not always especially rigorous. In some instances an example of the first type of overt organizational device proves upon closer examination to be one of the second, associative type, as when a heading such as *De vita patrum* introduces not only lives of the church fathers but also accounts of the Trojan War and the life of the pagan hero Apollonius of Tyre. The true subject in this instance was history. That the associative type of organization was possibly less a result of conscious attempts at imposing order than an unforced expression of world view perhaps argues against its being admitted as cataloging in the strict sense of the term, something constructed *kata logos*, or "according to reason." Nonetheless, much that appears completely chaotic and insensitive to the appeal of order in these documents can be found to evidence an order visible only when the attempt is made to perceive the world and the particular place of the medieval monk within it from the vantage point of the compilers of the catalogs and the users of the books recorded in them.

## Notes

1. James Westfall Thompson et al., *The Medieval Library* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939; reprint ed., New York: Hafner, 1963).

2. Classic studies of this type are those of Léopold Delisle, *Le cabinet des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, 3 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1868, 1874, 1881); and M. R. James, *The Ancient Libraries of Canterbury and Dover* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903).

3. Although the kingdom created by Charlemagne, who had himself crowned emperor in 800, did not survive as a political entity beyond the death of his son Louis the Pious in 840, his interest in learning gave stimulus to literary activity in the monasteries that continued to produce results through much of the ninth century. Also, many of the catalogs whose contents most fully reflect the influence of Charlemagne were not actually compiled until as late as the tenth century. For these reasons, the term "Carolingian" is for the purposes of the present study employed in its broadest dynastic sense so as to encompass the lineal descendants of Charlemagne through Louis V (d. 987).

4. Gustavus Becker, *Catalogi Bibliothecarum Antiqui* (Bonn: M. Cohen, 1885).

5. The full catalogs of which these tables represent an outline may be found in Becker, *Catalogi Bibliothecarum Antiqui*, catalog no. 6, pp. 4-13; no. 11, pp. 24-28; no. 22, pp. 45-53; and no. 32, pp. 64-73.

6. James, *Ancient Libraries of Canterbury and Dover*, pp. xxv-xliv, 13-36.

7. Becker, *Catalogi Bibliothecarum Antiqui*, no. 4, pp. 3-4; no. 7, pp. 13-16; no. 8, pp. 16-18.

8. *Ibid.*, no. 68, pp. 149-154; no. 69, pp. 154-157.

9. Delise, *Le cabinet des manuscrits*, vol. 2, pp. 487-504.

10. Dorothy May Norris, *A History of Cataloguing and Cataloguing*

*Methods, 1100–1850* (London: Grafton, 1939), pp. 14–15, 26–30.

11. Delisle, *Le cabinet des manuscrits*, vol. 3, pp. 9–72.
12. The passage may be found in J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina*, 221 vols. (Paris, 1863), vol. 101, col. 843.
13. Becker, *Catalogi Bibliothecarum Antiqui*, no. 68, pp. 149–154.
14. Ibid., no. 37, pp. 82–119; no. 38, pp. 120–125.
15. Delisle, *Le cabinets des manuscrits*, vol. 2, pp. 487–492.
16. Becker, *Catalogi Bibliothecarum Antiqui*, no. 7, pp. 13–16; no. 37, pp. 82–119; no. 38, pp. 120–125; no. 68, pp. 149–154.
17. Delisle, *Le cabinet des manuscrits*, vol. 2, pp. 441–443.
18. Norris, *History of Cataloguing*, pp. 26–30.
19. James, *Ancient Libraries of Canterbury and Dover*, pp. 13–36.
20. For fuller accounts of the classical educational curriculum, the seven liberal arts, and the decline in classical culture, see Henry Osborn Taylor, *The Classical Heritage of the Middle Ages*, 4th ed. (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1957), pp. 33–55; Andrew Fleming West, *Alcuin and the Rise of the Christian Schools* (New York: Scribner, 1892), pp. 4–22; Frederick B. Artz, *The Mind of the Middle Ages, A.D. 200–1500: An Historical Survey*, 3rd ed. rev. (New York: Knopf, 1965), pp. 85–94, 179–183; and Pierre Riche, *Education and Culture in the Barbarian West: Sixth through Eighth Centuries*, trans. John J. Contreni (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1976), pp. 1–7.
21. Augustine's philosophy of language is examined at length in Marcia L. Colish, *The Mirror of Language: A Study in the Medieval Theory of Knowledge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 21–35.
22. For example, Domenico Comparetti, *Vergil in the Middle Ages*, trans. E. F. M. Benecke (London: Allen and Unwin, 1906), pp. 75–95; and M. L. W. Laistner, *Thought and Letters in Western Europe, A.D. 500 to 900* (New York: Dial, 1931), pp. 26–33.
23. John J. Gavigan (trans.), in *The Writings of St. Augustine*, 17 vols. vol. 4 (Ludwig Schopp, ed.), (New York: CIMA Publishing, 1947), pp. 65–66.
24. As translated by Eleanor Shipley Duckett in *Alcuin, Friend of Charlemagne: His World and His Work* (New York: Macmillan, 1951), p. 125.
25. These and other generalizations concerning the monastic existence must not be assumed to apply to the mendicant orders founded in the thirteenth century. The Dominicans, Franciscans, and Carmelites had rather different motives, which involved preaching, missionary work, teaching, and combating heresy. In time they, too, gathered libraries as had the older Benedictine and other monastic orders. On the character of the libraries of these new mendicant orders, see K. W. Humphreys, *The Book Provisions of the Medieval Friars, 1215–1400* (Amsterdam: Erasmus Booksellers, 1964).
26. See the chapter contributed by Florence Edler De Roover to Thompson, *The Medieval Library*, pp. 594–612; and A. J. Piper's study of the numerous shifting of the book collection in Durham Cathedral Priory, "The Libraries of the Monks of Durham," in M. B. Parkes and Andrew G. Watson (eds.), *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts and Libraries: Essays Presented to N. R. Ker* (London: Scolar Press, 1978), pp. 213–249.
27. Delisle, *Le cabinet des manuscrits*, vol. 2, pp. 443–445.